

Reservoir Park,  
Compton Hill Water Tower  
(Compton Hill Water Tower)  
Grant and Russell Boulevards and Lafayette Avenue  
St. Louis  
St. Louis (independent city)  
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1832-A

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MO,  
96-SALU,  
116A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

RESERVOIR PARK, COMPTON HILL WATER TOWER  
(Compton Hill Water Tower) HABS No. MO-1832-A

Location: Reservoir Park, Grand and Russell Boulevards and Lafayette Avenue, St. Louis, St. Louis (independent city), Missouri

Significance: The Compton Hill Water Tower serves as an architectural landmark in its neighborhood; moreover, it is one of only three remaining in the city of St. Louis. Harvey Ellis, an architect important in the region, designed the structure.

Description: The Water Tower is a Romanesque Revival design composed of limestone, buff brick, and terra cotta. A stone pediment, which reaches a height of 34 feet, supports the shafts. Two separate shafts rise above this base, one square, the second, smaller and circular; A terminus and roof area, which is 44 feet, 1 inch high, caps the entire construction. The total height is 179 feet, 1 inch.

Each facade has primarily the same design, except for the asymmetrically-placed, small tower abutting the northwest corner of the main tower, and the monumental staircase and entrance porch found on the ground level of the west facade.

Walls are load-bearing masonry, surrounding a round interior space which measures 18 feet 9 inches in diameter. A metal standpipe for water occupies this area. A layer of asbestos and tar paper insulate the standpipe, which reaches a height of 130 feet. An iron staircase runs from the entryway to the top of the standpipe, and has landings for every 21 feet of rise in the staircase.

The smaller tower houses an overflow pipe connected to the city sewer system.

History: Built 1898. Architect: Harvey Ellis, while in the employ of the firm of George R. Mann and Edmond J. Eckel. C.F. Womeldorf did calculations for the bell-shaped roof, dated December, 1896.

Reservoir Park, Compton Hill Water Tower  
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HABS No. MO-1832-A (Page Two)

The masonry exterior cost \$48,000 to build. The Water Tower went into service in August, 1899; the superstructure was completed by November 30, 1899. However, the city removed the Tower from service ca. 1929 when it was discovered that newer additions to the city water system caused a loss of water from the standpipe into the overflow tower. Since 1958-1959 the Tower has supported the St. Louis Water Division's radio antenna used to dispatch and relay radio messages to the Division's vehicles throughout the city.

The Compton Hill Water Tower is located in a park which also contains the roofed-over Compton Hill Reservoir (still used for water storage) and a large statue, "The Naked Truth," by Berlin sculptor Wilhelm Wandschneider.

Sources:

National Register of Historic Places nomination form, "Compton Hill Water Tower," compiled by M. Patricia Holmes, June, 1972.

Telephone conversation with Carolyn Toft, St. Louis Landmarks Association, August 12, 1988.

Historian:

Robert Buerglener, HABS, August, 1988.

ADDENDUM TO

RESERVOIR PARK, COMPTON HILL WATER TOWER

(COMPTON HILL WATER TOWER)

Reservoir Park, Grant and Russell Boulevards and Lafayette Avenue

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